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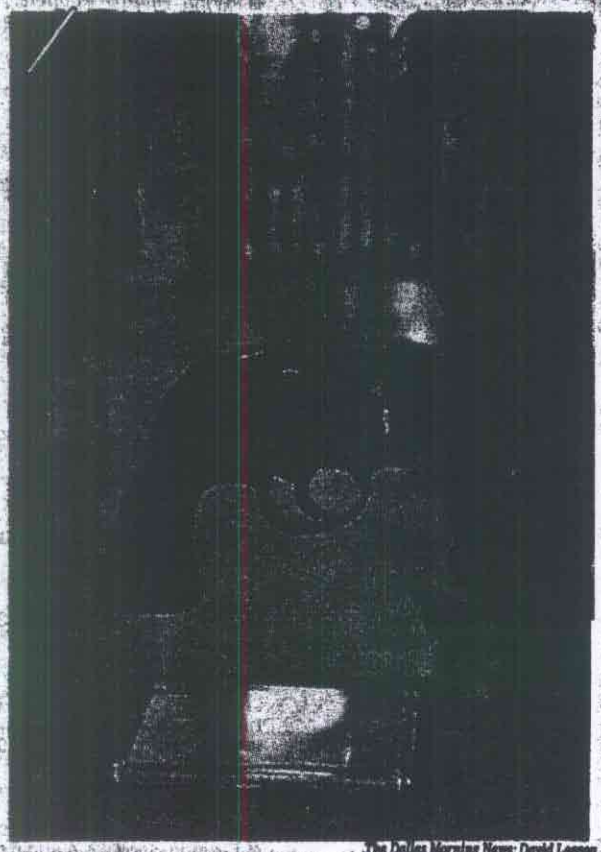

The Dallas Morning News: David Leeson

Teresa Stone and Debbie Pezzini of California examine the gun Jack Ruby used to kill Lee Harvey Oswald. Bullets fired from the gun went on sale Thursday to coincide with a Kennedy assassination symposium being held in Dallas.

Bullets from Ruby's gun go on sale

At $495 each, few are buying bits of history

By Enrique Rangel
Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

The man who bought the gun Jack Ruby used to kill Lee Harvey Oswald says he wants to sell bits of history: bullets fired from the .38-caliber Colt Cobra.

So far — at $495 a pop — only a few are buying.

Anthony V. Pugliese III, a developer from Boca Raton, Fla., who acquired Mr. Ruby's gun at an auction in New York on Dec. 26, said he hopes to sell 5,000 of the bullets as collector items.

He began the sale Thursday to coincide with the four-day Assassination Symposium on John F. Kennedy at the Hyatt Regency Dallas at Reunion, which ends Sunday.

Fred Erlichman, marketing director for the National Historical Mint of Boca Raton, the agency promoting the bullet sales, said that as of Friday evening, 15 people had

Please see BULLETS on Page 30A.

Bullets from Ruby gun go on sale for $495 each

Continued from Page 33A.

pledged to buy one of the bullets.

Mr. Pugliese is displaying the gun he bought for $220,000 at the JFK Assassination Information Center, on the third floor of the West End MarketPlace. Beside the gun is a display of one bullet.

Each bullet and cartridge case is individually numbered and includes Mr. Pugliese's signature. The bullet and the cartridge case come in a cherry wood presentation box with a clear glass top and a ruby red, French-cut velvet lining.

The buyer receives a certificate saying the bullet was fired from Mr. Ruby's gun; a photocopy of an affidavit signed by Earl Ruby, Jack Ruby's brother, authenticating the gun; and a photocopy of the Dallas police property receipt issued Feb. 18, 1964, three months after the shooting.

Not everyone had kind words for Mr. Pugliese's enterprise.

Ron Campbell, 47, of Toronto, who was in Dallas on Friday attending a software convention, said he was appalled by the display.

"I find this repulsive," Mr. Campbell said after he and Janet Lai, 42, also of Toronto, viewed the display of the gun and bullet.

"I just don't like the idea of people capitalizing on something so tragic, even if it is for a good cause."

Mr. Pugliese said he plans to donate the proceeds from the bullet sales to start a winter camp for underprivileged children in South Florida.

"We're doing this for a good reason," he said. "We want to take them to sunny Florida during the winter and show them the good life. We hope that will give them an incentive for a better life."

Becky Popoff, 42, an assistant administrator at NCR Corp. in Dallas, said she, too, found the bullet sale distasteful, but would go along if the money was used for a good cause.

Robert T. Johnson, administrator director of archives at the JFK Assassination Information Center, said the center received only two negative calls from about 1,000 people inquiring about the bullet sale.

Mr. Pugliese said he also wants to use money from the bullet sales to finance a mobile JFK museum that would travel to U.S. college campuses. The museum, he said, would educate young people about those four tragic days in November, from the president's arrival in Dallas to his funeral.

Some who viewed the display said they had no intention of buying the bullet because it cost too much.

"I couldn't afford it, but if I had the money I'd buy it," said Ron Ianitello, 44, of Denver, who was attending the four-day JFK symposium.

Said Michael McManimen, 43, a Dallas taxi driver: "To be honest with you, I don't put too much value on a bullet fired from that gun. The weapon itself is enough to see."

In June, Mr. Pugliese auctioned one bullet in New York to establish a market value. He said he sold it for $500.

Mr. Pugliese believes he will have no trouble selling the bullets. He also intends to offer them in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York and through a toll-free number.

"This is not an impulse buy," he said. "People will come see the bullet, go home, think about it and then decide to buy it. That's why we're here for four days."